

# Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

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## News

There will be a display entitled "Archaeology of Grand Forks, Idaho" at the Hayden Library April 24 - 30, sponsored by the Hayden Library and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. If you can make it, please provide a report to the rest of us.

Running for President of the American Numismatic Association is Bob Campbell of Salt Lake City. Attendees at regional coin shows are familiar with Bob and his "All About Coins" dealership. He is also the author of **Utah Trade Tokens**.

Richard Magnuson recently wrote me with one from "the good old days" of token collecting: "I was looking through some old correspondence yesterday and found my April, 1966 letter ordering 19 different Idaho tokens for \$10.80, including the required postage. These tokens included: the Edson token from Harvard; the Wurman token from Orofino; the Boston token from Moscow; the Horenberger token from Idaho City; and the Saugstad token from Herrick; The others were far more common, being from Donnelly, Clarkia, Deary, Bonners Ferry Bovill, Elk River and Glens Ferry. This order was made from a fixed price list issued by a dealer in Tecumseh, Michigan." That was a great deal even then, if you ask me!

With the note last month about the pins from Grangeville and Moscow promoting their goal of 10,000 population by the year 1910, I had hoped that one of you would actually own one. Sure enough, Mike Fritz produced this fine example. It is one of the 24 mm brass pinbacks "for the gentlemen" of which 50 were produced. Mike produced another bit of good news: he has the Mottorn piece which he purchased from Ford Knight and was not lost with the Knight collection after all.



The **Idaho Statesman** of March 26, 1999 has a nice article on a new "Texas-style" Barbeque restaurant which has opened in New Meadows. It is in the building that Clarence LaFay made for his combination bar, pool hall and barber shop. In 1910 he skidded two buildings from Meadows to New Meadows and combined them. The LaFay tokens were pictured in an early issue of this newsletter. The new owners retained the backbar and restored the soda fountain. Plan on checking it out the next time you are in New Meadows!

Summer is almost upon us, and we all have many things filling up our time. Once again, I will appeal to the readers of this newsletter to help the effort by sending me information to include. It need not be lengthy articles like the one dominating this issue, but I certainly appreciate anything I get from fellow collectors.

I will state again that for collectors who have shared their collections with me for cataloguing purposes or who have regularly contributed to the newsletter, there is no charge. If you are interested in reading only, the newsletter is available on an annual subscription basis for \$20 per year. I will send a few sample issues to collectors, but expect to hear from them within a few months or they will be dropped. For several, this will be the last issue unless they respond.

## Sweetser - Burroughs

This story is one that I have been researching for a number of years; it is time to present what I have so far. One of the characters of this story is still the object of an international following. Another was an Idaho historian whose writing is as unknown today as was his political career. Along the way are bits of trivia and coincidences that have intrigued me as I learned more about this business and its ties to pioneer Idaho.

Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut was where Henry "Harry" S. and his older brother, George T. Burroughs, Jr. met Lewis Hobart Sweetser. The three were classmates in Yale's engineering department, the Sheffield Scientific School. Major George Tyler Burroughs was a successful Chicago businessman, president of the American Battery Company. He and his wife, Mary Evaline, sent their two older sons to Yale in 1885. Lew Sweetser had attended the University of California for a year before transferring to Yale to study "dynamite engineering". He was the son of Andrew Ingalls and Lisbeth Hitchings Sweetser, well-to-do farmers and cattle raisers who were based in San Francisco and owned property for 30 miles along the Raft River from present-day Malta to where it flows into the Snake River 30 miles below American Falls.



Upon their graduation in 1889, the friends parted company. Lew Sweetser went to Idaho to work for his father and the Burroughs brothers returned to Chicago where they went to work for their father's battery company. This lasted only a short time as Harry's health began to deteriorate due to the acid fumes in the factory. Their family doctor insisted that a change of climate was needed, so Major Burroughs and Andrew Sweetser cooked up a deal to purchase land and set the three young men up in the cattle business. Their thought that the active life in the wide-open spaces of Idaho would not only restore Harry's health, but be good for all of them while teaching them the responsibilities of life.



SWEETSER & BURROUGHS



YALE, Idaho

The three named their ranch the "Bar-Y" in honor of Yale University. Their headquarters was set up very near where the Raft River store is now, at the point Interstate Highway 86 crosses the Raft River. In 1890 they established a post office at this outpost and named it Yale.

A neighboring cattle ranch in the Raft River country was that of Walter S. Sparks. The "Burroughs boys and Sweetser" traded work back and forth with the more experienced Sparks, gaining valuable

knowledge of the cattle business. Unfortunately, they had a hard time making even their expenses on the venture. Their fathers continued loaning money to the trio to keep their operation afloat. Sparks, on the other hand, did well. He eventually went into the retail meat business in American Falls, and his Sparks Meat Company lasted from about 1906 to 1936, although the senior Sparks died in 1931. There are four denominations [1, 5, 10, and 100] of 1914 Ingle System tokens known from the Sparks Meat Co. Each is known in only one example.



Back in Chicago, the youngest surviving member of the Burroughs family was (in today's terms) struggling to "find himself". Two younger sons had died in infancy, so the Burroughs family was especially careful with this child who exhibited much creativity in the form of writing and drawing from an early age. The youngster did fairly well through a series of private schools in Chicago, but he was definitely a "city kid". This changed quickly in 1891 when his father sent the young Edgar Rice Burroughs out to Idaho to visit his brothers for the summer. Truly a tenderfoot, he amazed the cowboys and won instant distinction when he tried to pay for a drink in an American Falls saloon with pennies: *"No one in Idaho had ever before seen a penny. Two drinks were 'two-bits'; one drink was 'one-bit'; a cigar was 'two-bits'; things were 'two-bits,' 'four-bits,' 'six-bits.'* There were no pennies and there was no paper money. Everything was silver or gold; at least I understand there was gold there, though I never saw any of it." This from his **Autobiography**. Ed was recalled from Idaho when the summer was over and sent to Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, a school his older brother Frank Coleman Burroughs had also attended. Ed's taste of the freedom of Idaho ranch life probably spoiled him for academics. He was popular there and was elected class president; his lack of attention to studies, however, resulted in his being dismissed from Phillips. Ed's disappointed father then sent him to the Michigan Military Academy in the hopes that this sort of school would put Ed on the correct path to success.

After a rocky stay, Ed did complete his studies at Michigan Military and even got an appointment to West Point. This came from a request by his oldest brother George to Idaho Congressman Edgar Wilson, but Burroughs failed the entrance exam. He was offered a job at Michigan Military Academy as assistant commandant for the 1895-96 school year, but by this time Ed had decided on a military career, so he quit his job after less than a year and enlisted in the Army, going to Fort Grant, Arizona Territory. He soon became disillusioned with the Army life and appealed for his father to use his influence to get him discharged. The discharge came through in the spring of 1897, and he planned to return immediately to Chicago, but he found that Lew Sweetser had gone to Mexico on a cattle-buying trip and needed help bringing the livestock back to Idaho on the train. Ed did then return to Chicago, but could not abide working for his father and could not settle on a direction for his career, so, in 1898, he headed for Idaho once again.

This time, his brother Harry loaned him the money to buy out the newsstand and cigar store of Victor C. Roeder on West Center Street in Pocatello. The change of business took place in late June, 1898. The store specialized in selling Kodak cameras and developing and printing photographs. This venture only lasted a few months as Burroughs ran out of money and Roeder returned to Pocatello and wanted to buy his store back. Once again, Ed Burroughs went to the Bar-Y ranch to work for his brothers.

Several years before, Burroughs and Sweetser had hit upon a new idea to make their fortunes. From the Bar-Y ranch which bordered on the Snake River, George, Harry, and Lew had observed prospectors coming up and down the Snake panning for gold along its banks. There was a fair amount of "flour gold" in the sands along the river, but they reasoned that there should be much

more deposited in the bottom of the riverbed. Putting their engineering training to use, in 1894 they built a large suction nozzle dredge, named the *Argus* and started to operate it in the river. Lewis Sweetser incorporated this venture on August 1, 1896 with an investment of \$24,600. He was president and a director. Other directors at this point were James R. Howell, operator of the ferry across the Snake River near where the dredge operated, George W. Sherrard of Pocatello, Walter T. Oliver, American Falls hotel man, and Charles E. Taylor of American Falls. It is not known why the Burroughs brothers were not part of this initial organization, but by June 5, 1900 when the board of directors met at Yale to amend the articles of incorporation to add two directors, the makeup of the organization had changed to include them. At that point, George T. Burroughs, Jr. was president, L. H. Sweetser was secretary, and the directors were H. S. Burroughs, F. Coleman Burroughs, and W. S. Sparks [their neighbor]. At this time John Sparks and H. V. Platt [who worked for the railroad] were added as directors.



Earlier in 1900, the Yale Dredging Company was incorporated on February 9. It was capitalized at \$100,000, being equally divided among the five principals: Coleman, George, and Harry Burroughs, Lew Sweetser, and Walter Sparks. Then, at that same June 5, 1900 Yale meeting, this board changed the articles of incorporation to reduce capitalization to \$24,000, most of it provided by Coleman Burroughs. Furthermore they expanded the corporate business statement to include raising and distributing water for mining, irrigation, and other purposes, owning stock in the Cassia County Telephone Co., carrying on a general merchandise business, and conducting a hotel and lively stable. A second dredge, the *Yale*, was built using a chain-driven elevator bucket system to bring the gold-bearing material to the surface.

Since Minidoka Dam and Lake Walcott behind it were yet to be built, it is believed that these two dredges operated from Klondyke Bar at the mouth of Raft River downstream to the area of Howell's Ferry, just below the Minidoka damsite. This lower operation was quite distant from the Bar-Y ranch, so a commodious two-story houseboat, named *El Nido* [the nest] was constructed to house the growing families involved in the endeavor. Besides Harry and his wife and two children, George had married Edna McCoy of Bellevue on January 10, 1900, Frank Coleman had married Grace Moss of Chicago on January 24, 1900, Walter and Frieda Sparks also lived on the houseboat for a time, as did the unmarried Lew Sweetser. A second houseboat was built to house the other workers.

Two notes from the **Shoshone Journal** of April 11, 1902 illustrate some of the happenings. "Mr. Jas. Howell of Howell's ferry was a Minidoka visitor latter part of last week, taking lumber and building materials down to add beauty and comfort to life on the mighty Snake." and "Among other recent visitors was Mr. H. S. Burroughs of the mining dredges who reports a delay to the upper dredge due to a broken six inch shaft, damaged by trying to pry from the bed of the river a boulder about the size of the dredge boiler."

As the mining operation was perfected and became routine, the Sweetser-Burroughs company saw that they could profitably establish a general merchandise store at Minidoka and be able to supply settlers in the region from Albion to Raft River. Both American Falls and Minidoka were on the



railroad so they had equal opportunity to ship and receive goods by rail. Their early partner James Howell's ferry provided the river crossing necessary to make the Minidoka venture competitive with businesses in American Falls. From the north side of Howell's ferry, it was only about 5 miles "as the crow flies" to Minidoka. Presumably the token was given as a promotional item to Sweetser-Burroughs customers from the south side of the Snake to pay for part of

their expenses in crossing the river. There is only one of these tokens known to me. It is 27mm aluminum, and catalogued as #MIN-4. It could be argued that this is a "two-location" piece with Howell's Ferry as the second location.

Fortunately, this story does not end here. Edgar Rice Burroughs and his childhood sweetheart Emma Hulbert were married in Chicago on January 31, 1900. Ed worked for his father's battery company, but continued his interest in poetry and drawing. He yearned to show his wife the adventurous life in Idaho, so he was always seeking an invitation from his brothers. In early 1903, the opportunity came. The mining operation of the Sweetser-Burroughs company began to play out, so they dismantled one dredge and moved it to the Stanley Basin with George Burroughs in charge. Ed and Emma went there to help, but Ed did not have much interest in the serious business of mining, so soon he was sent to help Harry who had moved the other dredge to a location on the Snake River near Parma. At Parma, Ed filled his spare time writing, producing an imaginative story – first in a long line of writing including **Under the Moons of Mars** and the world-famous **Tarzan** series. He also determined to run for trustee of the Village of Parma, winning the April, 1904 election by one vote.

Soon, however, the dredging company went broke and Ed was out of work. He drifted to Salt Lake City where he was a policeman for a while, then back to Chicago for a series of odd jobs, including office manager at Sears, Roebuck and Company. It was not until 1912 that he became the successful author still adored around the world. That year **Tarzan of the Apes** was published.

After the Sweetser-Burroughs Company was dissolved in 1904, George Burroughs went to Chicago briefly before moving permanently to the new town of Burley, Idaho, where he established the Burley Hardware Company. Harry, who had suffered an eye injury and was nearly blinded, also returned to Chicago where he worked for the Automatic Electric Company installing telephones. Frank Coleman Burroughs who had retained the general merchandise portion of the Sweetser-Burroughs and Yale companies, remained in Minidoka to operate the Burroughs Mercantile Company there until the store burned in September, 1906, at which time he returned to Chicago.

Lew Sweetser retained his property along Raft River, inherited his father's holdings, and bought out his father's partner, so he stayed with the ranching business when the Burroughs brothers were devoting more time to mining. Lew Sweetser ran as a Republican for State Representative from Cassia County, and was elected to the 1899-1901 term. In 1902, he married Miss Clara Hawkins of Salt Lake City, Utah whom he had met when she lived at Albion. He ran and was elected again to the House for the 1905-06 session. His popularity led him to run for Lieutenant Governor; he won election to this office twice, in 1909-10 and 1911-12. He started upon a campaign for election to the governor's office, but it was cut short, reportedly when Senator William E. Borah suggested that Lew would have to curtail his wife's drinking habit before he could become a serious candidate for governor.



Lewis Hobart Sweetser



Clara Hawkins Sweetser

This event made a dramatic change in the course of Sweetser's career. He soon sold most of his Idaho holdings and moved to Montana where he held agricultural jobs before getting entangled in oil "Get Rich Quick" schemes that took him to Wyoming, Kentucky, and Ohio. None of these worked out so he returned to Burley in 1924. There he dabbled in real estate, became manager of the Cassia County Fair, and wrote a series of columns for the Burley newspaper about early times and people in the region. These columns are real gems of Idaho history and contain such stories as that of the Verburg Bridge

recounted in a recent issue of this newsletter, and the story of Bill Dowdle, a badman who passed through Rock Creek [those of us who were at Salmon last year heard the Dowdle Bill song at Gibbonsville]. He also developed an interest in the human mind. Sweetser founded the Burley Psychology Club and gave a series of lectures around southern Idaho on "Practical Psychology".

Clara Sweetser died in March of 1936. Shortly afterward, Lew Sweetser moved to southern California to join his old friend and partner, George Burroughs, who had retired from his Burley hardware business and moved to Fontana the year before. Sweetser lived in North Hollywood, spending his retirement years studying and writing. In a coincidence suitable as an ending to this story, L. H. Sweetser died on June 5, 1944 and his friend George Tyler Burroughs, Jr. died just three days later in San Bernardino. They were cremated together, according to their plan.

The research for this story has taken several interesting turns. Soon after I obtained the Sweetser-Burroughs token, I noticed a sign, "Sweetser Summit", on Interstate 84 southeast of Burley. I am sure it was named for Andrew Sweetser and his pioneer cattle operation. Then, when researching further into the business, I came across a reference to Edgar Rice Burroughs having been in Pocatello. That led me to the biography **Edgar Rice Burroughs, The Man Who Created Tarzan**, by Irwin Porges. I recommend reading at least the first part of this 800-plus-page work to anyone interested in further information on the story. It is full of great photographs, including many from Idaho. Then, the staff at the Idaho Historical Library showed me a July, 1994 copy of "The original and only authorized Burroughs fanzine" **Burroughs Bulletin** containing a fine article, "*Sweetser and the Burroughs Boys*", by Phillip R. Burger. In it, Burger gave credit for a photograph to the Lewis Hobart Sweetser Collection at Knight Library, University of Oregon. I inquired there and got permission to look through the collection, so last summer I spent a day there. Duffy Knaus, Special Collections Librarian, was most gracious in assisting me. They made CD images of the Sweetsters, Yake postoffice, and the dredge shown above and I thank the U. of O. for allowing me to use them.

Best regards,

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